

The American Legion



For God and country

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wartime Budget Resolutions Fall Well Short of VA's Funding Needs

WASHINGTON, DC (March 18, 2005) - The leader of the nation's largest veterans organization said today the current budget resolution "falls short of veterans funding needs, especially during a time when this nation is at war. We have a new generation of veterans who will need medical services for many years to come," according to National Commander Thomas P. Cadmus.

The American Legion is deeply troubled with and did not support the House Budget Committee's proposed budget resolution, H. Con. Res. 95, with regard to funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), especially the reconciliation instructions targeted at earned veterans' benefits. "Reducing mandatory appropriations for veterans' disability compensation, pensions, and educational benefits at a time of war is inconsistent with the thanks of a grateful Nation," Cadmus said.

Just last year, VA's leadership said that the cost of doing business increases annually about 13 - 14 percent because of Federal pay increases and inflation in the health care arena. "Look at the cost of health care in the private sector, it is hardly flat-lined or declining. What makes Congress think that VA's health care costs are any different?" Cadmus points out. "Since the President's budget request is "scrubbed" by the Office of Management and Budget, VA's true fiscal requirements to meet the health care needs of America's veterans are somewhat skewed. During the 108th Congress, former VA Secretary Anthony Principi responded to Congress that the FY 2005 proposed budget was \$1.2 billion short of what he had actually requested. It appears this pattern of shortchanging VA medical care continues in the 109th Congress," said Cadmus. "America's veterans and their families deserve better ... period."

"The Senate's budget resolution also ignored my funding recommendations for FY 2006," Cadmus said. "Every major veterans' service organization that deals with the VA health care system everyday recommended more than \$2 billion in additional funding than offered by either chamber - without any budgetary gimmicks. Those young men and women at Walter Reed and Bethesda that I have visited did not shirk their duties and responsibilities, nor did the veterans of our earlier wars. No veteran should be shortchanged by those in Congress with higher national priorities than the ongoing cost of war."

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Resolutions Fall Short 2-2-2-2-2

Founded in 1919, the 2.7 million-member American Legion is the nation's preeminent service organization for veterans of the U.S. armed forces, including active duty, National Guard and Reserves, and their families. A powerful voice for veterans in Washington, The American Legion drafted the original GI Bill and was instrumental in establishing the agency that today is the federal Department of Veterans Affairs.

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Editors: This text and a high-res photo of Cmdr. Cadmus can be downloaded at www.legion.org.